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Well Poisoners

This week's issue of *Book Week* presents a review of USIA operations in the book publishing field that ought to arouse the people of this country to demand an end to an activity that is simply outrageous. An agency of the Government of the United States has spent $90,258, according to the testimony of USIA Director Leonard Marks, to publish the works of authors secretly paid by the Government.

The books thus produced are sold both in this country and abroad without any disclosure of the USIA role in picking the subject-matter, planning the book and paying the author. The unsuspecting purchasers do not know they are reading propaganda. And it is the acknowledged object of the program to conceal the Government sponsorship.

This is a species of fraud and dishonesty that discredits the Government. But it is even worse than that. It constitutes a kind of well-poisoning that diminishes public credibility for all printed works. The book buyer must be on his guard against all literature in a country where some of it is secretly subsidized by government. He cannot afford to take any publication at face value. He must enter every book store on his guard against the covert intrusion of the propagandist. He cannot afford to take any volume at its face value. A Government agency created to carry the story of America abroad is engaged in a shabby piece of trickery that mars the image of this country, wherever this deceit is known.

This practice violates in spirit if not in law the congressional injunction against domestic operations by the USIA. But what is really humiliating is that it violates standards of intellectual decency, affronts public morality and wrongs all authors and publishers by diminishing their public acceptance. Surely Congress can do something about this. Not one cent of public money ought to be appropriated for the purpose of polluting the stream of American literature.